

# Regionalization of Our K-6 Schools?

## **Regional School District Planning Committee (RSDPC)**

Annual Town Meeting 04-30-12 **Article 1**: Report to Town Meeting

*but first...* **RSDPC Forum #1 -- Wednesday April 11, 2012 7:00 p.m.**

Town Meeting established the Regional School District Planning Committee (RSDPC) at the November 9, 2011 Special Town Meeting, and required it to hold two open public forums to discuss Amherst-specific issues at the beginning of its work: to consider whether Amherst should join with one or more towns in a regional K-6 district.

The RSDPC will hold the first public forum on Wednesday April 11 at 7 p.m. in the Amherst Regional High School Library. This first forum's purpose is to gather Amherst-specific community thoughts and questions regarding a possible change to the governance structure of our schools.

Information gathered at this forum, and at a second forum (likely to be held in late May), will assure that the RSDPC considers the breadth of matters important to Amherst prior to joining one or more other towns in forming a combined body, a Regional School District Planning Board. The second forum will allow the RSDPC to address the questions and concerns raised by the Amherst community at the April 11 forum.

While ACTV/Amherst Media will tape the April 11 forum for later broadcast, it is important to check out the wealth of materials at the RSDPC webpage on the Town website, [amherstma.gov/rsdpc](http://amherstma.gov/rsdpc) <http://amherstma.gov/index.aspx?NID=1623>

Questions and concerns may also be submitted via email: [rsdpc@amherstma.gov](mailto:rsdpc@amherstma.gov)

The RSDPC will report on its initial work, including the April 11 forum, under **Article 1** at the Annual Town Meeting 04-30-12.

### RSDPC members:

Katherine Appy, School Committee (Chair)

Andrew Steinberg, Finance Committee

Alisa Brewer, Select Board

Additional background:

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING November 9, 2011

ARTICLE 1. Regional School District Planning Committee (School Committee)

VOTED unanimously to form a Regional School District Planning Committee (RSDPC), consisting of three (3) members, one of whom must be a member of the school committee as per M.G.L. Chapter 71, Sections 14, 14A and 14B. After a minimum of 6 public meetings, 2 of which are to be open public forums to discuss Amherst specific issues, the RSDPC may choose to join with a corresponding Committee(s) from another town(s) to form a Regional School District Planning Board (the Board). The purpose of the Board is to perform a detailed exploration of and recommendation as to forming a Regional School District for our K-6 school.

Action taken on 11/9/2011.

8 public meetings have been held already. The first forum was scheduled for 02-29-12 but was snowed out; the first forum will be held Wednesday April 11, 2012 at the ARHS Library.

RSDPC have also been created by Town Meetings in Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. Although the Amherst RSDPC joined with the other three towns in submitting a Community Innovation Grant for consultant funds needed to undertake the detailed financial and policy analysis that would be needed for full consideration of any change in regionalization, that grant application was unsuccessful.

Currently Amherst preK-12 schools are part of two systems. We have a preK-6 Amherst elementary school district (currently housed in three buildings: Crocker Farm, Fort River, Wildwood) which is overseen by the Amherst School Committee. Our 7-8 Regional Middle School and 9-12 Regional High School are overseen by a four-town Regional School Committee that includes the entire Amherst School Committee plus some School Committee members from the three other towns of the four-town 7-12 Region -- Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. The Amherst elementary district preK-6 and the Pelham elementary school preK-6 together form Union 26, thereby sharing a superintendent. The other two towns in our current four-town 7-12 region, Leverett and Shutesbury, share a preK-6 superintendent with Union 28 (Erving, Leverett, New Salem, Wendell, & Shutesbury).

Possible approaches to address some of the challenges of our current complicated and somewhat inefficient system include establishing an elementary region of two towns, or an elementary region of four towns; the latter would expand the current Region from 7-12 to preK-12. Other alternatives will also be explored, all with the intention of improving efficiency, coordination, curricular alignment, financial predictability, and student learning.

RSDPC members:

Katherine Appy, School Committee (Chair)

Andrew Steinberg, Finance Committee

Alisa Brewer, Select Board